

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 242

Recognizing the apology offered by the Government of Australia to the aboriginal people and its significance as a gesture of healing for this proud nation.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 12, 2009

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, Mr. MEEKS of New York, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. CLAY, Mr. MEEK of Florida, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, and Ms. FUDGE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the apology offered by the Government of Australia to the aboriginal people and its significance as a gesture of healing for this proud nation.

Whereas indigenous Australians are a people of many languages and traditions who arrived on the continent more than 50,000 years ago, and have one of the oldest continuing cultures on earth;

Whereas violence, discrimination, and disenfranchisement played a significant role in European and indigenous Australian relations, including the mass killings of indige-

nous Australians by European settlers during the 18th century, restricting indigenous Australians from having the unqualified right to vote in Australia until 1962, and forcibly removing children of indigenous and Torres Strait Island ancestry from their homes and communities and assimilating them in White families and orphanages for much of the 20th century, victims of which have become known as the “Stolen Generations”;

Whereas the adoption of such discriminatory laws and policies by the Australian Government undoubtedly contributed to the poverty, unemployment, substandard education, crime, and poor health care that continue to devastate indigenous communities;

Whereas despite centuries of official and unofficial systems of discrimination, Australia’s indigenous people have made profound contributions to Australia’s social fabric;

Whereas indigenous Australians were inspired by the American Civil Rights Movement and organized against institutionalized discrimination from the 1950s through the 1970s to fight for the rights and privileges that they were denied in their native country;

Whereas, on February 13, 2008, after decades of requests from activists and elected officials asking the Australian Government to express an unqualified apology for its treatment of indigenous Australians, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologized on behalf of the Australian Government and its Parliament for the Stolen Generation and the overall “past mistreatment” of indigenous Australians, and promised to address the resulting social, economic, and health disparities in indigenous communities;

Whereas, as part of this apology, Prime Minister Rudd also promised to “harness the determination of all Australians” to close the gap that lies between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians in life expectancy, educational achievement, and economic opportunity;

Whereas Australia’s national apology for the atrocities that it committed against the indigenous people is a significant expression of Australia’s willingness to come to terms with its past to better understand its present and build a better future; and

Whereas Prime Minister Rudd, in a speech delivered to the Australian Parliament on February 26, 2009, renewed Australia’s determination to address the disparities faced by indigenous people and committed to a national investment of \$4,600,000,000 over 10 years to programs aimed at eliminating these disparities: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) commends the Australian Government for
3 acknowledging the injustices of its past in order to
4 understand the injustices of its present and prevent
5 these injustices from continuing in the future;

6 (2) joins with the Australian Government in
7 hoping that this apology marks the start of a more
8 open and fluid communication between the indige-
9 nous community and the Australian Government, in-
10 cluding a commitment to addressing the social, eco-
11 nomic, and health issues that disproportionately af-
12 fect indigenous Australians;

1 (3) regards the Australian Parliament’s historic
2 recognition of its past wrongs as an inspiration for
3 other multi-ethnic nations around the world to ac-
4 knowledge the injustices of its past in order to un-
5 derstand the injustices of its present and prevent
6 these injustices from continuing in the future; and

7 (4) remains committed to comprehensively ad-
8 dressing the economic, educational, and health-re-
9 lated disparities that continue to affect some Black,
10 indigenous, and other communities of color because
11 of discriminatory laws that were authorized and en-
12 forced by the United States local, State, and na-
13 tional governments.

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